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SIPDIS

FROM USMISSION UNESCO

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TAGS: [UNESCO](#) [AORC](#) [UNGA](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [EAID](#)
SUBJECT: UNESCO REACTS TO UN HIGH-LEVEL PANEL REPORT "DELIVERING AS ONE": A CHALLENGE OR AN OPPORTUNITY?

REFS: A) 06 State 187687

11. This is a guidance request, see para 4.

12. Summary: After some initial hesitation, UNESCO's Director General Matsuura is engaging member states on the results of the UN high level panel report "Delivering as One." In a recent standing-room-only information session attended by UNESCO staffers and diplomats, the DG's chief of staff and director of strategic planning both put a positive spin on the report. They said that the report emphasizes sectoral expertise in the national development process, and that this constitutes an opportunity for specialized agencies. But the director of Strategic Planning later confided to US Mission Officer: "We succeeded in getting a link between national development plans and specialized agencies, but otherwise we lost a lot." Although the secretariat stressed the need in some cases to "seek to modify...what are after all at this stage only proposals," UNESCO does intend to be proactively engaged. This includes participation in the seven pilot country offices to be established this year. Of course, this will have budgetary implications, the secretariat notes, and is one reason that the DG gives for needing a zero real growth 2008-9 budget, with the ultimate goal of securing real growth. (Other implications for UNESCO are outlined in paragraph 9).

13. At the information meeting, the DG's chief of staff Elizabeth Longworth reported that she chairs UNESCO's working group on UN reform. In terms of UNESCO's efforts to shape the reform process, D'Orville described the high-level panel as something of a "closed shop." But DG Matsuura himself made two appearances before the panel, and there were four UNESCO interventions in all. Secretariat staff participated and will continue to participate in the

sub-committee of the High-Level Committee (HCLM) on Budget (represented by UNESCO HR Director Dyane Dufesne) and the Chief Executive Board (CEB) High-Level Committee on Programs (represented by D'Orville). Looking forward, the DGs of the specialized agencies will meet in March to seek a common position on the role of the specialized agencies within UN reform. The CEB meeting in April is another key meeting.

¶4. Comment: Perhaps the reservations expressed and questions posed by UNESCO and other UN specialized agencies on the high-level panel report can inform the USG strategy. UNESCO is clearly worried that its limited in-country influence will be even further diminished. We continue to stress to our colleagues here that the panel's findings have not been officially adopted. But the impact of the "Delivering as One" proposals on the UNESCO secretariat appear so far to be somewhat positive; there seems to be a realization that a more targeted approach at the field level is needed, as competition from other agencies looms. Post Requests additional guidance on the High-Level Panel Recommendations as they pertain to specialized agencies in order to prepare for the DG's February 16 information meeting with member states on this subject. End summary and comment.

¶5. UNESCO Secretariat organized an hour-long forum on the "Delivering as One" report within the context of the "60 minutes to Convince" series. Highlighting the degree of interest in this topic, the audience was standing room only, unprecedented for this series of weekly information sessions; much of the audience was drawn from the secretariat. On the panel were Elizabeth Longworth, recently appointed chief of Staff of DG Matsuura, and Hans D'Orville, UNESCO's Director of Strategic Planning. Longworth reported that she chairs a Working Group on UN Reform in which D'Orville and Director of Field Offices Lamia Salmon also participate.

DG's Office: A Challenge, but also an Opportunity...

¶6. Longworth began by professing herself pleased by the level of interest evidenced by the size of the audience, expressing regret that she had not been able to have representatives from UNESCO's field offices participate in the panel. She described the evolution of UN reform efforts since 1997, noting that the report of the high-level panel was one of several recently issued UN reports pertinent to UNESCO. Longworth characterized the conclusions of the panel's report as "going to the heart of program delivery in-country," stressing that they would "have impact on UNESCO's work at all levels." Sounding a theme that she rehearsed throughout the session, she declared "this exercise represents not only a challenge, but an opportunity for UNESCO." Longworth outlined the findings of the high-level panel regarding the UN system, highlighting the need for reform, a weak financial base, a "supply-driven" approach to programming; she concluded that the report constituted "a loud call for change" to a system that had "lost its edge as a source of development knowledge."

Strategic Planning: An Opportunity, but Also a Challenge

¶7. In his presentation, Strategic Planning Director D'Orville focused on the potential impact of the report of the High-Level Panel, saying that at stake is the future of the UN system in the development sector, and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals. Regarding the report's impact on specialized agencies, D'Orville struck a positive tone: "the emphasis the report puts on sectoral expertise in the national development process constitutes an opportunity for specialized agencies," but he also stressed "we must capitalize on this."

¶8. D'Orville went on to highlight a number of "open questions" regarding the "Delivering as One" approach (Comment: Such questions are D'Orville's habitual manner of expressing skepticism. End comment). Will designating "one leader" - an experienced regional coordinator - imply day-to-day authority over all agencies, or better coordination in pursuit of UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs)? What are the financial implications of the "one office" approach - would costs increase if UNESCO no longer occupies office space supplied gratis by the host government? How does the "one program" differ from the UNDAF? Do all of the "ones" have to be implemented at once, or can they phased - "perhaps there is no one-size-fits-all model." In D'Orville's view, the key element is

"one program." In describing the panel's conclusions in the areas of development, humanitarian affairs, and the environment, D'Orville raised additional questions. Regarding humanitarian assistance, who can access the CERF (Central Emergency Response Fund)? How will UNESCO fit into the humanitarian affairs scheme managed by UNDG and OCHA? On the environment, D'Orville charged, the high level panel's report "doesn't take into account" UNEP's unique nature, and "is ignorant" of current UN team efforts, including the WWAP (World Water Assessment Program) and UN Oceans and UN Water.

¶9. Although D'Orville rejected a "one-size-fits-all approach," endorsing instead a "managed pluralism," he asserted that UNESCO was determined to be "alert and pro-active" in responding to the panel's conclusions, including in bringing the concerns outlined above "to the table." He also signaled UNESCO's determination to be present in the seven pilot UN offices slated to start in 2007 (subject to review). Noting the 2012 target date for opening all of the offices, D'Orville described this as a "mind-boggling task - can we be in all of them, or can we make a choice?" At stake for UNESCO, D'Orville posited, is its capacity to: contribute to the attainment of national development priorities; reassert its thematic leadership in education, the sciences, culture and communication and information technology; and collaborate with other specialized agencies. The panel's recommendations would have impact on UNESCO in the following areas: the program management cycle; the allotment of program resources (at the country, regional and cluster office levels); and the need for staff training in common country programming and results-based management. The panel's recommendations would also have great impact on UNESCO's decentralization scheme, now based on the cluster office model, as well as on the role of UNESCO's National Commissions; for this reason, UNESCO's decentralization task force has been revived.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS: "THAT TRAIN HAS PASSED"

¶10. During the question and answer session, the U.S. queried the panelists on the focal point for UN reform in the Secretariat. DG's Chief of Staff Longworth said that the Bureaus of Strategic Planning and of Field Office Coordination both play key roles in the Working Group on UN reform that she chairs; the director of Field Offices had just in fact returned from a trip to Viet Nam. The circle is gradually widening, with the sector assistant director generals to be brought into the act "as we move more concretely." The group had recently identified ten areas in which UNESCO would need to change to respond to panel recommendations. This working group is also playing a liaison role vis-a-vis other UN agencies. The ADG for Culture would have to "ensure the rightful place of culture" in national development schemes.

¶11. A representative from Viet Nam asked about UNESCO's coordination with her government in the context of the planned pilot UN office there. She was told that UNESCO had not participated in the drafting of the UNDAF for Viet Nam. What is needed now is a One UN Plan that is a "UNDAF plus", to include strong elements of education, science and culture. Concern was voiced by a staffer from the Brasilia Office that UNESCO's administrative rules are not sufficiently flexible to allow for in-country cooperation with other UN agencies; another staffer expressed concern about the budgetary implications of UNESCO's participation in the one UN offices, with complete coverage expected in 2012. In response to both questions, the panelists stressed necessary support and understanding from member states. Implementing the high-level panel recommendations would mean that "we are going to need to review how we operate"; the potential budgetary impact of the recommendations is one reason the DG advocates a zero real growth budget, with the goal of securing real growth. When a science sector specialist asked how the "Delivering as One" approach would marry with UNESCO's global and regional approaches to environmental sciences, Longworth responded that UNESCO's role in fostering UN cooperation marries perfectly with UN reform. But D'Orville warned bluntly, "We can't say that because UNESCO deals with science, we can't be part of this. That train has passed."

¶12. In response to a question on next steps, Longworth stressed the DG's quick commitment to join the 2007 pilots. But a "pro-active response" must be balanced with a "a refusal to follow blindly - in some cases we need to seek to modify, not follow, what are after all

at this stage only proposals." It will be important to convince the One UN pilot countries that UNESCO can lead on UNESCO's priority areas. Looking forward, Longworth outlined a six point action plan, including: enhanced staff awareness; a new Medium-Term Strategy (2008-13) presenting a clear idea of "where we are strong"; the UNESCO Working Group on UN reform serving as a coordinating mechanism with links to the decentralization Task Force; UNESCO presence at key meetings; continued UNESCO efforts at internal reform; and the DG's continued commitment to reform and to "Delivering as One". To advance the last point, of course, financial resources will be needed to pursue the one UN pilot offices.

Koss